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REVIEWS

A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare. The Life and Death of King John. Edited by HORACE HOWARD FURNESS, JR. Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Company, 1919 [1920].

After an interval of more than six years, *King John*, the eighteenth play in the New Variorum Shakespeare, has at last appeared. If the time necessary to complete this edition be computed by the period between *Julius Caesar* (which appeared in 1913) and the present play it will be seen that the work will not be finished until about 2028. It is therefore surely the duty of every reviewer to press upon Dr. FURNESS, with the most profound respect for the great achievement of his father so satisfactorily carried on by himself, the advisability of engaging the services of a corps of editors who, working under his general direction, would be able to issue the remaining plays within a reasonable number of years and who could make the completion of this great edition the outstanding accomplishment of Shakespearean scholarship in America in this generation. That such a coöperative undertaking is easily possible has been proved by Professor R. M. Alden's Variorum edition of the *Sonnets*. If reluctance to assign the major responsibility for any one play to someone else makes the thought of divided editorship distasteful to Dr. FURNESS, it might still be possible (following the example again set by Professor Alden) to portion out certain problems in each drama—the rival merits of quarto and folio texts; the date of the play; sources; stage history; foreign commentators; etc.—to a group of sub-editors. Much time could be thus saved. Everyone, I am sure, will sympathize with Dr. FURNESS in his obvious feeling of filial piety which would naturally make of the New Variorum a sort of family monument; and there would be no disposition on the part of any Shakespearean scholar to claim more than a very subordinate share of the responsibility and honor of the task.

The text of the present play is a reprint of that of the First Folio according to the plan adopted by the elder Dr. Furness after some three or four plays had been printed with an eclectic text. It is noteworthy that in this, unlike earlier volumes of this edition, there is no uniformity in the reproduction of typographical blemishes such as "leads," raised or dropt letters, and lines in need of justification. Some of these are reproduced; some not; but the matter is not of sufficient importance to war-

rant offering a complete list of such variants from the Folio. On the other hand, certain errors in the reprint, whether of spelling or of punctuation, are worthy of record both because such departures from the original where the minutest accuracy is desiderated in the reprint should be noted and because the paucity of such departures is better evidence of Dr. FURNESS's general carefulness than would be any mere unsubstantiated words of commendation. I have had for purposes of comparison only the Methuen facsimile of the Devonshire copy of the Folio; it is therefore possible (since variants exist between different copies of the Folio) that what I have noted as an error may be an exact reproduction of the text of Dr. FURNESS's copy of the original. But it is unlikely that such is the case in each of the following nine or ten lines. Be it noted, first, that in various places in the text it is difficult to distinguish between a battered lower-case "r" and a battered lower-case "t." In some instances Dr. FURNESS prints "t" (e. g. II, i, 557: "daughtet"); in others "r" (e. g. V, iii, 12: "rhe"). There are many other places in which the question whether the letter is "r" or "t" is quite as doubtful (e. g. II, i, 559 and 605).

Setting aside this doubtful point, I note the following errors: I, i, 130: add period at end of line.—I, i, 168: add period after "K"—II, i, 119: add the mark of contraction over the o in "fro"—II, i, 321: add comma after "France"—III, i, 172: for "pencil" read "pencill"—IV, i, 141: delete comma after "sleep"—for "fit" read "sit" (long s)—V, vii, 61: for "faile" read "saile" (long s)—V, vii, 118: the s in "teares" seems to be inverted and is of a larger font.

It may be noted also that, though in other necessary places Dr. FURNESS has facilitated reference by adding the modern numbering to acts and scenes misnumbered in the Folio, he has neglected to do this at the beginning of Act V, where the absurd Folio enumeration "Actus Quartus, Scaena prima" remains uncorrected. I have noted a very few errors in the text variants, a portion of the editorial work where the possibilities of errors in proof are enormous and upon which most painstaking care has been spent. The commentary is excellently printed; I have noted not more than six or seven errors. There are four small misprints in the text of *The Troublesome Reign*. It is not very apparent why, since the spelling of the old play is modernized, the punctuation should not have been somewhat rectified.

The to-be-expected loyalty of Dr. FURNESS to the Folio text is seen in the decisions which he renders in several disputed passages; and in the rare instances in which he favors a departure from that text his verdict is given reluctantly. The two most noteworthy cases of his abandonment of the Folio are: II, i, 345 where in the original text the Citizen of Angiers who

parleys with the opposing kings is called "Hubert"; and III, i, 143 (a line that has called down a perfect avalanche of commentary) where Dr. FURNESS is inclined to accept the emendation "uptrimmed" for the "untrimmed" of the Folio. Dr. FURNESS's own novel interpretations of difficult passages are few in number; for the most part he plays the modest though arduous part of the compiler and arbiter; but four suggestions that he advances are of sufficient interest and importance to justify some mention of them even in a brief review.

A line that has occasioned more comment than almost any other in the play is Constance's "For grief is proud and makes his owner stoope" (III, i, 72), a sentiment puzzling in itself and apparently contradicting what has gone before in Constance's speech. Dr. FURNESS suggests, though with diffidence, that "owner" may mean "one who acknowledges or recognizes." This interpretation, which precisely fits the context and makes the word "owner" apply to the kings for whom Constance declares that she will wait, seems to the present reviewer excellent.

IV, ii, 120: "Where is my mother's care?" The letter "c" in the last word is so battered and worn in the Folio text that many editors have taken it for an "e" and therefore read "Where is my mother's eare?" Dr. FURNESS shows that the letter in question is a somewhat defaced italic "c" of a different font from that usually employed but which appears earlier in the play in one word and again later in the play in another, in both which places there can be no doubt whatever that the letter is "c" not "e." He thus establishes the Folio text beyond peradventure and in doing so affords convincing proof, for those who may need it, of the value of letter-by-letter study of the Folio text.

V, ii, 150: "Your Nation's crow." Dr. FURNESS destroys faith in an explanation hitherto curiously unquestioned that the reference here is to the Gallic cock as a national symbol. He shows (as any former editor might have shown, but did not) that the cock was not used by the French as a national emblem until long after Shakespeare's time.

V, vi, 18: Hubert explains to the Bastard that "grief and endless night" hindered him from recognizing him at once. The adjective "endless" has occasioned a good deal of comment. Dr. FURNESS suggests that Hubert refers, not to the actual darkness of the seemingly endless night of anxiety through which Hubert is passing, but to the "endless night of death." Though this interpretation is feebly substantiated by the fact that Hubert goes on to report that King John is dying, it yet seems to me unnecessary to give to the phrase any such unliteral meaning. The simplest interpretation (as Dr. FURNESS himself so often advises) is apt to be the best; and accordingly I believe that

Hubert intends no more than that the darkness of the night, which to his anxious mind seems endless, prevented him from recognizing the Bastard at once.

I am not certain that Dr. FURNESS was well advised in omitting all passages from the chronicles in the section of his appendix dealing with the source of the play. It is true that all modern critics regard it as certain that Shakespeare merely remodeled the older *Troublesome Reign of King John*; but this fact is not proof that he did not use also material from other sources. Thus, the bursting of the bowels of the monk who tasted the poison that he gave to the king, which is mentioned in Grafton's *Chronicle* and is referred to by Shakespeare, is not mentioned in the older play. Perhaps, however, the excerpts from various chronicles given in the course of the commentary are sufficient; to reprint larger extracts in the appendix would have swelled an already large volume inordinately.

An astonishing omission from the section of the Appendix dealing with the "Dramatic and Poetical Versions of the Life of King John" is that of any reference to Robert Davenport's by no means negligible play *King John and Matilda*.

It is regrettable that the excellent plan, followed in former volumes, of separating foreign from English criticism has not been adhered to in this play. Some needless confusion might have been avoided had Dr. FURNESS occasionally supplied editorial warnings in brackets in various places in the appendix, as he has done in the commentary, where earlier critics have made positive misstatements. Finally, it may be remarked that it would be convenient if in future volumes of this edition Dr. FURNESS would refer to the latest and definitive editions of various writers rather than to older, no longer standard texts. Thus, his references to Middleton are to Dyce's rather than to Bullen's edition; those to Nashe are to Grosart's rather than McKerrow's; those to Donne are to Grosart's rather than Grierson's. The edition of Ward's *History of English Dramatic Literature* employed is that of 1875.

The foregoing comments, of necessity limited almost entirely to a few corrections of detail, must not be construed as in any way in contradiction to the feeling of admiration and respect with which the reviewer desires to greet this latest instalment of a truly monumental work.

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